

1960 ANNUAL REPORT
CITY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

The City Planning Department carried out a broad range of studies and activities during the past year. Following is a brief summary of the work carried out by the Department during this period.

I - URBAN RENEWAL

A - Church Street Project - UR Mass. 13-1

During 1960 the bulk of the Church Street project land was sold at Public Auction to Arrowrock Realty Company of Boston. After the auction, but prior to transferring the deed to the land, building plans had to be prepared by Arrowrock and approved by the Lowell Housing Authority. The Redevelopment Plan required that the Lowell Housing Authority "consult the City Planning Department for its concurrence." Many weeks of conferences were held between the Planning Director and Arrowrock architects and engineers before a satisfactory site plan was prepared and before a mutually agreeable architectural style was developed. These plans were eventually drafted into final form and submitted to the Lowell Housing Authority for final approval. Deed to the land was recorded on December 30, 1960. Construction of the buildings, which will include 85,000 sq. ft. of modern commercial floor space, is to be started in March 1961 with completion required by March 1962.

B - Northern Canal Project - UR Mass. R-16

(1) A final Eligibility and Relocation Report was completed by the Planning Department under a contract

with the Lowell Housing Authority. The Department received \$5,200 for this work, the money being deposited in the City of Lowell general fund.

- (2) A final project report for this large 100 acre renewal area was prepared and almost completed in 1960. This work is being done under contract with the Lowell Housing Authority and the Department will receive \$15,200 upon final completion of the work. The work to be accomplished under this contract includes the following:

- a. The Redevelopment Plan
- b. Relocation Report
- c. Rehabilitation plan and report
- d. Project improvement report
- e. Cost estimate and financing report
- f. Other reports related to land acquisition, demolition and disposition.

C. Workable Program

A workable program report including all the documents and exhibits required by the Housing and Home Finance Agency was prepared during 1960. This report is expected to be officially submitted to the federal government in early 1961. The items covered in this report and the exhibits assembled include the following:

- (1) Zoning Ordinance
- (2) Building Ordinance
- (3) Plumbing Ordinance

- (4) Electrical Ordinance
- (5) Housing Code
- (6) Fire Prevention
- (7) Planning Department Ordinance
- (8) Land Use Map
- (9) Paleographic Map
- (10) Commercial Use Map
- (11) Industrial Use Map
- (12) Population Distribution Map
- (13) Vacant Land Map
- (14) Substandard Dwelling Non-Salvable Map
- (15) Dwelling Deteriorated Salvable Map
- (16) Thoroughfare Plan
- (17) Elementary Schools
- (18) Junior High and High Schools
- (19) Community Facilities Map
- (20) Capital Improvement Program
- (21) CBD Land Use Map
- (22) Parking CBD Map
- (23) Zoning Map
- (24) Planning Board Ordinance
- (25) Rules and Regulations for Subdivision of Land
- (26) Neighborhood Analysis
- (27) 1960 Proposed Budget
- (28) Assessor's Work Sheet 1958
- (29) Assessor's Work Sheet 1959
- (30) The Chamber of Commerce of Greater Lowell 1960 Program Summary

D. Other Renewal Studies

The Department continued to make preliminary studies of other renewal areas as time and staff limitations permitted. The general need for a large scale urban renewal program in Lowell and the opportunities open to the City in such a program were outlined in the 1959 Planning Department Annual Report. Our 1960 studies bear out the 1959 findings, and in fact, force us to note that Lowell must undertake a large scale renewal program as soon as possible if it hopes to reap the benefits of the state and federal aids now available. Planning Department estimates indicate that Lowell can rid itself of almost all of its 4,500 sub-standard residential structures, and renew and make available for rebuilding 400 acres of potentially valuable city land at a net cost of only 30 million dollars in public funds. Under present federal and state-aid formulas, the City cost or share would be only 5 million dollars, an almost unbelievably low figure when it is predicted that such an expenditure would generate new private investment well in excess of 50 million dollars.

Specifically the Planning Department recommends that the following renewal programs be initiated in 1961:

- (1) Application be made for General Neighborhood Renewal Plans for the Acre area bounded generally by Salem Street, the Western Canal, the Pawtucket Canal and the Merrimack River.

- (2) Application be made for GNRP funds for planning the entire Hale Street area, bounded by Chelmsford Street, the B&M & NY, NH & H Railroad rights-of-way, and Plain Street.
- (3) Application be made for GNRP funds for planning the entire Back Central area.
- (4) Application be made for GNRP funds for planning the lower Belvidere area.
- (5) Application should be made to place the entire Central Business District under a GNRP planning program.

It is recommended that these five GNRP areas be planned simultaneously, that the work be let out to private consulting firms under contract with the Lowell Redevelopment Authority and that the planning work be coordinated and supervised by the Planning Department.

This procedure is recommended because it is unrealistic to assume that Lowell could build up a permanent staff of professionals in view of the national shortage of such personnel, in view of the relatively low pay scale for professionals in the city, and particularly in view of the fact that the Boston Redevelopment Authority will expand its professional staff by more than 100 during 1961, adding emphasis to the existing shortage of such personnel, particularly in this area. Under this type program where consultants are used to make detailed plans of specific projects, the Planning Department staff must be enlarged to cope with the additional work involved in co-

ordinating project planning with the city's general plan.

It should be the City's goal to have these five large areas under contract for detailed planning before the end of the year.

Lowell has a head start and a unique advantage over most of the cities in the northeast. We have a completed general plan to guide the city in its renewal project planning. We have a complete inventory and analysis of substandard structures and areas, and a neighborhood plan for the entire city. We have our major highways planned in locations where they will give new life to the renewal areas, vital access to the Central Business District and traffic relief to almost every section of the city; the Massachusetts Department of Public Works has concurred in these highway plans. This vital and important planning is now behind us. But this planning will have been wasted unless a large scale renewal program is put into effect during 1961.

The problems of all cities, their blighted housing, their congested neighborhoods, their obsolete industrial and commercial areas have grown so serious that they are now recognized as a national problem. Urban affairs will soon become a cabinet post in Washington. The old urban-growth formula of booming suburbs and decaying cities is proving unworkable for a healthy and prosperous nation. The problems of the city and the suburbs are essentially one large problem, and ideally should be solved together by local people working together. Steps taken in 1960 by Lowell and its surrounding towns to form an Area Planning Committee and to work jointly on common problems will prove

a boon to this area if this Area Planning Committee gets down to business. In the meantime, the City of Lowell has a vast and immediate job to perform in rebuilding its substandard areas. Almost unlimited aid in a variety of ways will soon be available to help the city do this job.

II - INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Planning Department acts as the official planning agency for the Lowell Development and Industrial Commission and New Industrial Plants Foundation, and develops both a general Industrial Park plan and specific site plans to assist in the development and promotion of these industrial areas. Detailed site plans and sketches were prepared showing the possible development of Sites 5, 8, and 11 in the Industrial Park. A zoning change establishing a new Industrial Park District and map was drafted. Property maps, photographs and a general development plan was prepared for the proposed Black Brook Industrial Park off Route 3 in the anticipation that a large industry, Polaroid Corporation, would locate there.

III - PLANNING BOARD, ZONING AND SUB-DIVISION CONTROL

The Planning Director acts as secretary ex-officio to the Lowell Planning Board. The Board met five times in 1960, and on the same dates held 5 public hearings on zoning changes as required by Law. One new 21 lot subdivision, Karen Street, was approved by the Board. 65 plats on existing public ways were signed by the Director and the City Engineer stating that approval under the subdivision control law was not required.

IV - COORDINATION WITH CIVIC GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

The Planning Director has followed the spirit of the

Planning Department Ordinance which states that he shall "Confer with civic groups; prepare public relations programs; participate in planning conferences; speak to public gatherings."

In this respect, the Director and staff worked with the following groups and committees during the year and prepared maps, charts, and prepared data and reports as required to properly assist these groups:

1. Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce (the Director has worked closely with the following Chamber Committees).
 - a. Parking and Traffic
 - b. Highways
 - c. Recreation
 - d. Central Business District
 - e. Urban Redevelopment
 - f. Area Planning & Development
2. Lowell Advisory Parking Commission.
3. Lowell Incinerator Commission.
4. Cupples Square Merchants Association.
5. Greater Lowell Area Planning and Development Committee.
6. League of Women Voters.
7. Greater Boston Economic Study Committee.
8. Massachusetts Department of Public Works.
9. The Lowell Housing Authority.
10. School Department.

In addition to working and meeting with the above groups, the Department prepared plans and reports, or reviewed and revised plans on the following general subjects:

1. Towers Corner Area.
2. Western Avenue Closing.
3. Middlesex Street Grade Crossing.
4. Water Intake Plant.
5. Ice Skating Rink.
6. French Street Bridge.
7. Beautification of Banks of Merrimack River.
8. School Site in Pawtucketville.
9. Preparation of \$5,400,000 Bond Brochure.
10. Interchanges on Route 495.
11. Pheonix Avenue Industrial Area.
12. Industrial sites along Route 495.
13. Cook Wells relocation.
14. CBS Expansion.
15. Reiss site & RR spur to Site 5.
16. Merrimack Mills reuse.
17. Photo coverage of specific areas.
18. South Common School.

V - U. S. CENSUS REPORTS

The Planning Director is an official "key person" for the U. S. Bureau of the Census, and in this respect has established Census Tracts for Lowell and the five surrounding Towns which comprise the Lowell Standard Metropolitan Area. 1960 Census Tract data has been made available to the Department by the Census Bureau and this material should be mapped, assembled and printed in book form for local business and public agency use. However, staff and time limitations prevented the Department from carrying out this work. Many

requests for this material had to be turned down.

VI - PARKS AND RECREATION

The Department prepared a detailed and comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of the North Common for the Public Works Department. Some of the landscape work required by the plan was started in the fall of 1960. The Department also prepared a recreation layout for a section of the Reilly School.

VII - GENERAL

In addition to the major work items listed above, the Department assisted many groups and public offices during 1960. Work on the General Plan was carried on as time permitted. Two preliminary plans for large subdivisions were studied and returned to the developer.

Staff

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